

BUCK ROGERS

IN THE 25TH CENTURY



BY PHIL NOWLAN
AND
JACK CHALKIN

POOOR old Jules Verne! He took a look into the future and all he saw was the possibilities of the Airplane and the Submarine. The real facts of science—the tremendous advances in invention which were to include such amazing devices as the jumping belt, interplanetary rocket ships, the rocket pistol, inertron and all the other amazing developments of the twenty-fifth century—which Buck Rogers herein describes—Jules overlooked them all.

Now listen to Buck Rogers.

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Buck Rogers

By PHIL NOWLAN and DICK CALKINS

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I, BUCK ROGERS, am the only man alive, so far as I know, whose normal span of life has been spread over a period of five centuries!

I was just twenty years old when the great World War of 1914-18 ended and I was mustered out of the Air Service where I had served for eighteen months on the battle fronts of France as a Pursuit Pilot. Soon after returning home I got a job surveying the low levels of an abandoned mine located near a great city. Deep in this mine, I was cut off from return by a cave-in, and succumbed to a curious and unidentified radio-active gas I had descended to study. I sank into a state of suspended animation in which I was "preserved" in all my youth and vigor until, five hundred years later, some shifting of strata once more let air into the ancient workings—and I awoke.

I had no idea, at first, that I had been unconscious for more than a few hours. But when I staggered up out of the mine a shock awaited me. Gone was every handiwork of man that should have met my eyes, swallowed up in a



forest obviously centuries old, though the contours of the valley and the hills opposite were familiar.

I shall pass over the days of mental agony that I spent in the attempt to grasp the meaning of it all, days in which only the necessity of improvising crude traps and clubs with which to secure food preserved me from insanity, and begin with my first glimpse of a Twenty-fifth Century American.

A TWENTY-FIFTH CENTURY AMERICAN

I saw her first through a portion of woodland where the trees were thinly scattered, with dense forest beyond, from which she had just emerged. Overjoyed at the prospect of human companionship at last, I was about to shout, but something in her tense, alert attitude warned me.

She was clad in rather close-fitting garments. Around her waist was a broad belt, and above it, across her shoulders, a sort of pack, of about the proportions of a knapsack. She wore gauntlet gloves and a helmet.

She was backing cautiously away from the denser section of the forest, step by step, when suddenly there came a vivid flash and a detonation like that of a hand grenade some distance to the left of her. She threw up an arm and staggered a bit, in a queer gliding way.

Then recovering, she retreated more rapidly toward me. At every few steps she would raise her arm and, it seemed, merely point here and there into the forest with a curious type of pistol, from the muzzle of which there was no flash nor detona-

tion. But wherever she pointed there was a terrific explosion deep among the trees.

After firing several times she turned quickly toward me, and leaped desperately, and to my amazement, literally sailed through the air, between the scattered trees for a distance of fully ninety feet; though at no time during this jump did she rise higher than about twelve feet off the ground.

But as she completed her leap her foot caught on a projecting root and she sprawled gently forward. I say "gently" for she did not crash down as I would have done, but slid in a weightless sort of way, though when she finally collided with the trunk of a great tree, she seemed to have plenty of *horizontal momentum*. For a moment I stood gaping in amazement. Then, seeing that blood oozed from beneath the tight little helmet, I ran to her, and got another shock; for as I exerted myself to lift her I staggered back and nearly fell, quite unprepared for the lightness of her. She weighed only a few pounds, perhaps 4 or 5.



SHE FELL SLOWLY TO EARTH

For a moment I busied myself trying to stanch the flow of blood. But her wound was slight and she was more dazed than hurt. Then I thought of her pursuers, who by this time must have come up within shooting distance. I heard no sound, however.

THE PURSUIT

I took the weapon from her grasp and examined it hastily. It was not unlike the automatic to which I was accustomed. With fumbling fingers I reloaded it with fresh ammunition from her belt, for I heard, not far away, the sound of voices, followed almost immediately by a series of explosions around us.

Crouching behind a tree, I watched, ac-customing myself to the balance of the weapon.



"THE EVIL FACE"

Then I saw a movement in the branches of a tree. The face and shoulders of a man emerged. It was an evil face, and it had murder in it.

That decided me. I raised the gun and fired. My aim was bad for there was no kick at all to the weapon, and I struck the trunk of the tree several feet below the girl's pursuer. But it blew him from his perch like a crumpled bit of paper. And he *floated* to the ground like some limp thing lowered gently by an invisible hand. The tree, its trunk blown apart by the explosion, crashed down.

Then I saw another one of them. He was starting one of those amazing leaps from one tree to another, about forty feet away. Again I fired. This time I scored a direct hit, and the fellow completely vanished in the explosion, blown to atoms.

How many more of them were there I don't know, but this must have been too much for them, for shortly afterward

I heard them swishing and crashing away through the tree tops.

I now turned my attention to my newly found companion, and observed, as I carried her lightly to the nearby stream, that she was gloriously young and beautiful, and that her apparent lack of weight was due to the lifting power of the strange device strapped across her shoulders; for though slender, she was well developed, and there was firm strength in her lithe young body.

She moaned softly as I gently removed the close fitting little helmet, and there were orange-gold glints of fire in her hair where the little beams of sunlight, filtering through the forest foliage, fell upon it.

Her injury was really trifling, though the blow had stunned her. Still holding her lightly in my arm, I washed away the blood with water from the stream. At the refreshing touch she moved a bit, and half opened her eyes, and looked at me, it seemed, without the full realization of consciousness. Then she sighed and relaxed. "Thanks," she murmured. "That f-feels good. I'll—I'll be all right in a moment." And unconsciously she snuggled a bit closer in my arm.

THE AWAKENING

Then I felt her body stiffen, and she was looking at me with wide, startled blue eyes. For a moment she was as one paralyzed with amazement. Then, in one sudden whirl of violent motion she had torn herself from me and landed some ten feet

away facing me in tense, alert hostility. In her hand was the gun, which I had put back in her holster, and there was no doubt about her readiness to squeeze the trigger had I made the least nervous movement.



"RAISE YOUR HANDS!"

"Raise your hands!" she commanded in a cold, hard little voice. And I reached for the sky without argument. "You're one of them," she accused. "And I'm taking you in. Where are the others?"

I tried to grin, but fear it was a sickly effort, for the gun in her hand looked businesslike, and the blue of her eyes was as cold as ice now. "You mean the man who—who attacked you?" I asked. "No, I'm not one of them. In fact I think I disposed of a couple of them for you—with your gun, which you see I gave back to you."

At this she seemed less sure of herself; but no less suspicious. "Put down your hands if you want to," she conceded. "But at the first break . . ." There was a wealth of meaning in the unfinished sentence.

"Now then," she said, advancing a step, "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

"My name is Buck Rogers," I replied. "And I'm not doing anything much except trying to keep alive with the little game I can catch around here."

"Your clothing is strange," she mused, looking me over from head to foot. "There's something queer about all this.

There lies that outlaw over there. You must have captured him, because I didn't. All I remember is making a big leap, catching my foot in something, and then—I saw stars!"

I explained exactly what happened while she gazed straight into my eyes, her glance never wavering.

"I believe you," she said finally, and after a moment's hesitation, put away her gun. She took a single easy "step," covering the entire distance between us, and said simply; "Thanks for saving my life. Now what's the rest of the story?"

There was no way out of it. I couldn't invent a yarn successfully to fit conditions in a day and age of which I knew nothing, and I certainly did not expect the girl to believe that I was centuries older than she. But I had to take a chance.



SHE LISTENED INCREDULOUSLY

She listened patiently; scornfully incredulous at first, but with more tolerance and growing amazement as I went on. And when I had finished she looked thoughtfully at me for some time.

WILMA

"That's all very hard to believe," she said at length, "but I do believe you, Buck Rogers." She held out her hand. "I am Wilma Deering, of the East Central Org, and I'm just finishing my turn at air patrol."

"Air patrol?" I queried. "But you have no plane here, have you? I don't see how you could use one in this forest."

For a moment she looked puzzled, then laughed. "A plane? Oh yes. Wasn't that what they used to call the old-fashioned airships centuries ago?"

"No, I haven't one here, but we have aircraft of many types and all are greatly superior to those in use in the ancient civilization you knew. You don't need them when you have a jumping belt"; she indicated the pack across her shoulders; "unless you're going a long distance. What I mean is, I'm on patrol or guard duty to give warning—with rockets—in case any raiding aircraft of the Red Mongols come this way. But



BUCK USING JUMPING BELT

come Buck," she added in a most friendly manner. "We must return at once to the city. And I promise you some amazing sights if the knowledge we have of life as it was lived here five hundred years ago—back in the 1930's—is true. Great scientific marvels have been brought about since then."

Quickly we stripped the jumping belt from the fallen outlaw. Adjusting it properly on my shoulders, Wilma showed me how to leap with it. My efforts were crude but soon I caught the knack of it, and, although I could not match Wilma for speed or distance, we made rapid progress and at last came in sight of a city so amazing in its magnitude and seeming complexity that my astonishment was boundless.

CONQUEST OF GRAVITY

I found myself in a world in which gravity had been conquered by means of truly marvellous inventions. Science had accomplished wonders.

The mysteries of the jumping belt were explained. It was made of *inertron*, a synthetic element of great *reverse weight* which falls *away* from the center of the Earth instead of *toward* it, and which counterbalances all but a few pounds of the wearer's weight. I learned to leap great heights and distances with that pleasant and effortless ease that made aircraft and other vehicles in the 25th Century unnecessary, and indeed undesirable, for personal transportation, except where speed or protection from the weather was required, or where crowded conditions precluded the use of the jumping belt.

It was a strange sensation at first, to give a little hop that normally would carry me twelve inches off the ground, and shoot into the air some twenty or thirty feet, to drift down and land again almost as lightly as a feather. Or to give a great shove against the ground, and soar sixty or seventy feet upward.

But for *speed leaping* I found it was necessary to cultivate a certain delicate instinct of balance. I felt very much as I had when, as a boy, I ran alongside a horse, letting the animal pull me as I took great, leaping steps. In short, I found that although weight apparently had vanished, *momentum remained* and if I hit anything while shooting forward horizontally, I hit it hard.

It was for this reason that the use of jumping belts in cities, useful as they might have been in leaping to the upper stories of buildings or the upper levels of the vast moving sidewalks, was generally prohibited. The temptation to make speed with them was too great. Too many serious accidents had been caused by those who leaped into crowded places with uncontrollable momentum. But to soar across the country, in great easy leaps of sixty to ninety feet or more at the speed of an ice-skater, was delightful.



WILMA

WOMEN SOLDIERS

It was, perhaps, all the more delightful to me because my instructor in the art of leaping was *Wilma Deering*, that slender, blue-eyed, golden-haired, high-spirited young *soldier-girl* who was destined to be my companion and capable assistant in so many astounding adventures in this marvelous universe.

Equality of the sexes had been one of the developments brought about during five centuries. It was part of the education of all

young girls to spend a certain amount of time in *military service* as well as in various industrial and mechanical activities. Naturally, most of them stayed in the kind of service to which they were best fitted (and the mechanical conveniences of the age made them practically as efficient as men in nearly all lines) unless they married. Then they adopted home-making as their career, and were subject to call for military or other service only in case of emergency.

Wilma, who had self-reliance, fearlessness and stamina, even beyond the high average of her 25th Century sisters, had naturally remained in the military service, for which her talents eminently fitted her, and into this same service I naturally gravitated.

WEAPONS OF THE 25TH CENTURY

The weapons and equipment of the military service were most interesting to me. Men and girls wore close-fitting uniforms of a *synthetically fabricated material*, not a woven cloth,

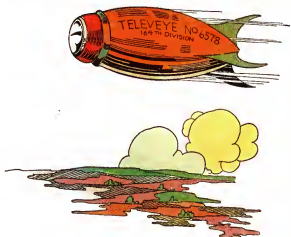


WILMA AND BUCK

that had the consistency of soft leather and yet was most difficult to cut or tear. For service in cold climates, uniform cloth was *electronically* treated to radiate inward a continuous glow of heat, while the outside surface was heat resistant. For warm climates the cloth was given a spongy texture for aeration, and

a high ratio of heat conductivity.

The jumping belt was, of course, a part of the regular equipment, as was the close-fitting helmet, of the same material as the uniforms, into which were built the tiny receivers of the individual radio-



TELEV-EYE

phone sets that enabled an officer to give commands to his entire force, scattered over an area miles in extent, or to converse with a single scout individually from a distance.

Of the weapons, the *rocket pistol* was the nearest thing to the firearms of the 20th Century, I knew. It was very much like an old automatic, except that its magazine was much larger, and the propelling charge was in a tiny cartridge case that travelled *with* the highly explosive bullet instead of remaining in the pistol, giving flatter trajectory and greater range. And some of

these bullets had explosive power equal to artillery shells of the 20th Century.

There were, of course, *rocket guns*; great squat cannon from which leaped self-propelling shells capable of shattering an area of a mile or more in radius.

The *telev-eye*, used either as a weapon of destruction or for scouting, was an aerial torpedo, its weight eliminated by in-ertron counterbalancing, radio-controlled, with a great "eye" or lens, behind which was located a television transmitter that relayed back to its operator, who was safely entrenched miles in the rear, the picture which this "eye" picked up. Once the telev-eye picked up a fugitive aircraft, that ship was doomed, for no ship could outmaneuver or out-speed these terrible projectiles of destruction, which were so small that they could seldom be hit by enemy guns.

Another most efficient weapon for short range work was the *paralysis gun*. This was a pistol, from which flashed a faintly visible, crackling beam of energy vibrations that temporarily paralyzed certain brain centers. A person hit by this ray instantly dropped rigid and paralyzed, to remain that way for minutes or hours, and then recover with no worse effects than a bad headache.

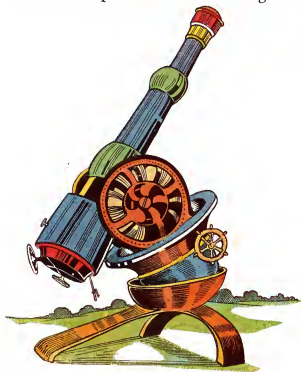


PARALYSIS GUN

But to me one of the most amazing weapons of the 25th Century was the *lightning gun*. This wasn't really a gun at all, though it was called such from its general appearance. It was

an electronic generator and projector. From it flashed forth an invisible beam of carrier-wave oscillations along which could be sent a stupendous electrical charge. Its use was against air-

craft. It was only necessary to focus the beam on the unsuspecting target, and then flash along it an electrical charge of opposite polarity to that in the clouds. When that ship later neared a cloud, it was struck by lightning. Obviously great care had to be taken in the operation of the lightning gun, or the gun itself



LIGHTNING GUN

might pull a bolt down from the clouds. It could only be used under certain atmospheric conditions. Batteries of these lightning guns were stationed at strategic points over the country and along the sea coast, co-ordinated to "fire" all at once, in groups, or singly, as necessity required.

AMAZING CITIES

I entered into the life of the 25th Century with a mighty zest. On every hand were marvels almost unbelievable. Cities of towering pinnacles. Others that had been roofed over with great domes of *metallo-glass*, a transparent product with a strength greater than steel. And still others that were in reality one single great building, spreading for miles, with mazes of thoroughfares, internal corridors and external galleries, along which shot automatically controlled *floating cars*.

The lift in these cars was furnished by an over-balance of inertron, but the *cosmo-magnetic* grip of the guide rails embedded in the pavements held them down to within twelve inches of the ground. One had only to enter one of these cars, locate his destination as to avenue, cross-corridor and level on the triple dial and then relax. An amazingly



25TH CENTURY CITY

complex system of car and power-house controls guided the vehicle promptly and safely by the shortest available route to the recorded destination.

But I never ceased to wonder at the amazing number of these marvels whose real beginnings, back in the 20th Century, I could actually recall.

Radio? It was basically and fundamentally woven into the whole fabric and structure of the 25th Century civilization. But *such* radio! Radio that embraced myriad types and varieties of *electronic, sub-electronic, infra-magnetic* and *cosmic* oscillations. Matter could be formed out of force with it. And even as the 20th Century scientists conceived and executed great scientific advances, so the 25th Century scientists to an even greater extent developed new, *synthetic elements* of strange properties, not existing naturally in any part of the universe. Inertron, for instance, was one of these. It had weight; but its weight caused it to fall *up* instead of *down*.

RED MONGOL TERROR

However, despite the development of five vivid centuries of scientific achievement, man's own social and moral progress still lagged behind the progress of his creations. True, the average was far higher than it had been in the 20th Century, but there were on the face of the globe races whose advance in material civilization had been accompanied by moral and spiritual decay.

There were, for instance, the terrible *Red Mongols*, cruel, greedy and unbelievably ruthless, who for a time, all too long,

utterly crushed a large part of humanity in a slavery frightful to contemplate.

In their great battle craft, sliding across the sky as though riding on columns of scintillating light, they drove like a scourge over all North America, with their terrible *disintegrator rays* blasting men and entire cities into nothingness. Where these beams fell, matter simply ceased to exist, and an instantaneous flicker was sufficient to gash the



RED MONGOL WITH DISINTEGRATOR RAY MACHINE

landscape with channels and canals sometimes a hundred or more feet deep and leave iridescent, vitreous scars where soft earth had been before.

The disintegrator ray, however, became one of the most useful tools of 25th Century civilization in small projector form, with which tunnels could be bored and automatically finished with a hard vitreous surface with amazing rapidity, or with which refuse could be most economically destroyed, either by use of the hand machines or permanent installations.

Wilma and I saw service in the war against these cruel Red Mongols and played an exciting part in the many fierce battles with them.

KILLER KANE AND ARDALA

But even among the more advanced races criminals still existed, and it was the destiny of Wilma and myself to frustrate the evil plans of certain super-criminals, *Killer Kane* and his companion, *Ardala*, and so win their undying hatred and enmity.



KILLER KANE

Wilma, like other youngsters of all centuries, had had her dreams, and unfortunately these had centered lightly at one time on a man who then had an unblemished reputation for integrity and ability, but she had broken with him instantly when she realized the potential evil that lay beneath his vivid personality. This man was Killer Kane.

My coming and the interest Wilma showed in me had fanned Kane's smouldering resentment into a seething flame of hate. He later plunged into a criminal career of such utter daring and magnificent proportions as to be unequalled in the annals of two centuries. And though the beautiful, sleek adventuress, Ardala, was his constant and capable partner in crime, Kane never forgave nor forgot the wound to his vanity nor his consuming passion for revenge.

And Ardala, though giving Killer Kane all the affection and loyalty of which her fierce, deceitful, feline nature was

capable, suffered constantly the pangs of burning jealousy, and in consequence matched his hatred of Wilma and me with an enmity for us no less deadly because of her subtle talents.

Throughout the Earth, and even beyond, into the vast voids of space, and other strange planets, Wilma's struggle and mine with Killer Kane and Ardala was fated to continue.



KILLER KANE AND ARDALA

CONTROL OF SPACE SHIPS

For interplanetary travel *was* an accomplished fact in the 25th Century. Even back in 1933 aviation engineers constructed a craft to fly the *stratosphere*, that upper section of the Earth's atmosphere in which the air is too rare for breathing, and from which its density declines gradually to the vacuum of interplanetary space.

The first *space ships* in which we, Wilma and I, feeling infinitely less than microscopic, dared the immensity of outer void, were rocket propelled. In a vacuum, whirling fan blades

are futile for propulsion, for there is nothing for the blade to pull or push against. But the rocket, so to speak, provides "air" against which to push. The blazing gas, roaring out



ROCKET SHIP

of the rocket tube, piles up against that which was emitted the preceding instant, and has not yet had time to expand to extreme rarefaction. The reaction of this piling up shoves the ship ahead. And since there is no air friction in space to retard the ship a

single impulse would give it a momentum that would continue forever, or until it was altered by some such event as entering the gravitational field of some planet, or colliding with a planetoid. Such speed, however, would be very slow, and the enormous distances to be covered in space made it imperative to attain speeds undreamed of in the antiquated days of 1933—five hundred years in the dim past.

INTERPLANETARY NAVIGATION

But with a continuous blast such as these ships used, they roared away from Earth at constantly accelerating speed. A rate of acceleration somewhat less than that of a falling body on Earth (and even back in 1933 experiences of aviators and parachute jumpers had proved the human system can stand the acceleration of gravity) but which constantly continued for even a few hours produced terrific speed.

And as the space ship was so constructed that its *bow* was its *top*, and its *stern* the *base*, this *upward acceleration* had the effect of pressing its passengers *downward* against its decks with something not far from equivalent to the force of gravity. At the half-way mark the ship, now floating through space at frightful speed, was gently swung about by small side-blasts, steadied with its *base* pointed in the direction of travel. And so for the second half of the journey the main blasts acted to *decelerate*, the ship gradually, and at the same rate as the former acceleration. This deceleration substituted for gravity in the same way, and by the time the ship arrived at its planet of destination a few days, or a few months later, its speed was so reduced that it could safely enter the atmosphere and ride down on its rocket blast to a gentle landing.

The controls of these space ships had been so carefully worked out by the scientific engineers—and the ships themselves so nicely balanced that a crew of two men—or girls for that matter—could easily operate one of the gigantic crafts.

OLD DOCTOR HUER—SCIENTIST EXTRAORDINARY

But this conquest of vast distances had not been possible until Old Doctor Huer, foremost scientist of the 25th Century, with whom Wilma and I were associated in many adventures, had invented a method of creating *matter in gaseous form from the energy impulses of sunlight and cosmic rays*, with sufficient speed and in sufficient quantity to serve as rocket fuel. For no ship

could hold enough rocket fuel for an entire interplanetary trip. It had to be derived from some outside source en route.



DR. HUER

NON-RECOIL ENERGY

Huer, an amazing man for his age (I knew him to be over seventy), an indefatigable scientist and an irrepressible adventurer, also invented and developed the

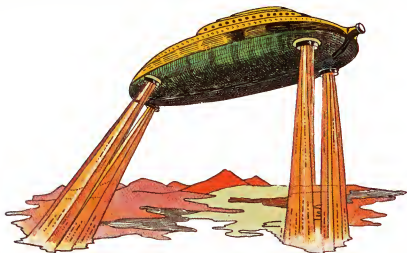
practical application of *non-recoil energy*, or as it was sometimes called, "*one-way energy*," by which a man might literally "lift himself by his bootstraps."

The non-recoil energy tube was a small affair, resembling an ancient electric flashlight. It emitted a beam of energy which acted with controllable "push" against anything at which it was directed, but without any recoil whatever against the user. The principle was not dissimilar to that of shock and rebound

absorbers on ancient automobiles or the recoil devices of ancient cannons, but it was a matter of carefully balanced electronic and sub-cosmic energy control rather than one of mechanical construction.

Curiously, a man might hold one of these tubes pointed upward in one hand, and placing his other hand over the projector lens, rise on it as though holding on to a strap.

Force tubes, of course, had been known for a long time, but in these the push was equal at both ends of the tube. They were, as a matter of fact, almost identical with the powerful *repeller rays* on which the dreaded air-raiding ships of the Red Mongols rode, beams of faint light that pushed downward with terrific force against the ground, and upward with equal force against the keel of the ship generating them. The Mongols maneuvered



MONGOL SHIP

their ships by the simple method of altering the slant of these rays. Slanted astern, they drove the ship forward, and vice versa.

Huer's non-recoil energy, of course, had innumerable applications. It was ideal motive power for all kinds of vehicles, aircraft and space ships. And in *industry* it had a thousand applications.

ECONOMY OF LABOR

Had we not been plunged by circumstances, and the deadly hatred of Killer Kane and Ardala, into one desperate adventure after another, we could have found a never-ending interest in the adroit uses to which this convenient power of Dr. Huer's was put in the daily industrial life of the people. I had seen men punch holes in the hardest steel with a device little larger than a screwdriver, and with no more effort than a housewife might use in cutting biscuits out of a slab of dough.

COMMUNITY KITCHENS

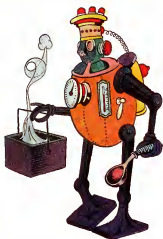
There was very little home cooking, however, in the 25th Century. At least not in the cities; and only a small percentage of the population was required to run the *farms*.

A marvelous system of conveyors led from the *community kitchens* to every apartment. One could order his meal a la carte or table d'hote. In due course a wall panel would slide back, and a "floating table" would ease gently into the room, safely balanced on "*lifters*" of inertron, with everything in readiness. It required but the pressure of a finger to guide

this to any part of the room where one chose to sit, and anchor it by lowering the counterbalancing weights underneath it. When hunger was satisfied, it only remained to push the table back and close the panel on it. The kitchens themselves were mazes of ingenious devices for handling the food and dishes, which for mechanical considerations were square rather than round.

SYNTHETIC FOOD

But I never could cultivate a taste for certain of the foods that were the product of synthetic laboratories. For by this time less than half of all food-stuffs came from the farms. Men had learned to create the most nourishing of foods from minerals alone, by a process of disintegration and electronic recombination into complicated organic substances easily assimilated by the human system.



MECHANICAL CHEF

VANISHED FARMS AND ROADS

Indeed, most of the land was no longer under cultivation, for an area of a few miles radius around each city was all that was needed for agricultural purposes, so much of the bulk food was produced synthetically. In consequence the *forests* were growing again, and vast sections that had been highly

farmed in the old days were now stretches of woodland and prairie untouched by the hand of man, for even freight was not carried by rail, and there was no use for *roads*, although over the beauty of this wilderness the *air routes* hummed with the swift passage of freight and passenger traffic from one center of population to another, and occasionally outing parties or forest patrols could be seen leaping lightly over hill and dale with the aid of their jumping belts.

THE RED PLANET

But my interests were not confined to Earth. Stranger still than this world of the 25th Century were those other worlds to which my adventures carried me.

Mars, with its clear sparkling air, its cloudless skies and its pale, greenish yellow sunshine, its vast red deserts and great canals, many of them ten to twenty miles wide, sweeping in straight lines and immense curves, to form fascinating patterns when seen from the upper air levels; its peculiar beasts, its occasional jagged mountain ranges of crystal-clear quartz, and its amazing people, so like those of Earth in most respects, but so unlike them in certain of the customs and mental reactions.

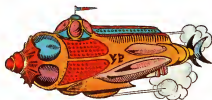
MOONS OF SATURN

The *Moons of Saturn*, a little galaxy of worlds, some larger and some smaller than our dead, airless moon of Earth, were so close together that they appeared (from the inner ones) like great pale discs sliding perpetually in confusing orbits across a blue-

grey dome. And *Saturn* itself, always an amazing sight as it filled half the sky with its great rings looped around it. On these worlds I never knew whether to call it night or day, for the reflected light from Saturn was almost as great, although soft and diffuse, as the hard, clear light from the distant sun; and that from the other moons was much like the light of Saturn itself.

THE LIQUID-AIR OCEANS OF JUPITER

Jupiter, another amazing planet, where men lived on vast plateaus that were in reality the tops of mountain ranges *thousands of miles* above the valleys, in the mysterious depths of which the blue air liquefied under a pressure almost too great for the mind of man to comprehend. No Jovian had ever plumbed the depths of those valleys. No craft *could* descend into them more than



JOVIAN INTERCONTINENTAL FLYER

a fraction of the way. No material existed in the universe of which a vessel could be made that would not crush like an eggshell under that super-pressure. So Jovian life was confined to the mountain tops that were continents surrounded by "seas" of air, across which the intercontinental flyers flashed on their weary journeys; for the distances were vast. Jupiter has a diameter about ten times that of Earth, and many an intrepid explorer has been lost thereon.

THE EROS MYSTERY

Then there was *Eros*, the cigar-shaped planetoid that swung end over end in an orbit beyond that of Mars, and on, and *in* which Wilma and I found things that staggered and shattered our imaginations.

ATLANTIS, THE CITY UNDER THE SEA

But there were wonders on Earth too, undreamed of back in the 20th Century, even though hints of them remained in old forgotten legends. The legend of *Atlantis*, for instance, the city and continent that sank beneath the sea in prehistoric times, and of whose original inhabitants many of the Caucasian races are descendants.

Atlantis still existed, under the ocean, inhabited by men who through the countless ages had become amphibian, who were equally at home in the artificially ventilated corridors and chambers of their submarine city, or in the water of the sea surrounding it, who had a civilization no less advanced, but strangely different from that of Earth's land races, from whom they had been living apart for eons.

It was Wilma and I who "discovered" Atlantis. It was there that one of our most desperate struggles with Killer Kane and Ardala occurred. Far beneath the surface of the Atlantic, these two super-criminals succeeded in balking our every move. However, it was we who finally succeeded in—but that is a story in itself.

THE ASTERITES

And there were the *Asterites*, tiny men not more than a foot tall, who came from outer space, and began with deadly determination their campaign of conquest and destruction of the planet Earth. And it was Wilma and I who bore the brunt of their first attack, with consequences that could not have been foreseen.

AND SO, it was among such surroundings and events as the foregoing that Buck Rogers, the lithe, sinewy, 20th Century youth who by a strange trick of fate jumped the time gap from the 20th to the 25th Century, and Wilma, that dashing, fearless lovely girl of the new day, lived and loved and struggled, both joyously and mightily, to overcome the evil that not only for the World, but for the Universe, was personified in the ruthlessly bitter, magnificent wickedness of Killer Kane, and the evil that lay in the heart of Ardala.



ASTERITE AND WILMA